

The Greater Fool

The Greater Fool Series - II

mischiefmanager

The Greater Fool by mischiefmanager

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Summary:

Who is the greater fool, (or something like that) asked Obi Wan Kenobi, the fool or the fool who follows him?

Richie is the fool. Obviously. Eddie is the fool who followed him. And now Eddie feels like he can answer Obi Wan with confidence: the greater fool is the one who doesn't call bullshit on the bullshitter and instead goes, *what the hell, why not? It's not like there's anything better to do.*

The Greater Fool

Of all the stupid shit Richie has suggested over the years he and Eddie have been friends, this has been, by far, the stupidest shit they've ever done. The pinnacle, the height, the cream of the crop—the fresh, steaming swirl on the pile of bullshit. Eddie feels that this turd-cherry-on-top-of-the-shit-sundae situation can be summed up pretty succinctly with a line from Star Wars that he may or may not be remembering correctly: *Who is the greater fool*, (or something like that) asked Obi Wan Kenobi, *the fool or the fool who follows him?*

Richie is the fool. Obviously. Eddie is the fool who followed him. And now Eddie feels like he can answer Obi Wan with confidence: the greater fool is the one who doesn't call bullshit on the bullshitter and instead goes, *what the hell, why not? It's not like there's anything better to do.*

It's worse than the time Richie nicked an unfiltered cigarette from his mom's purse and talked Eddie into sitting with him under the bleachers after school while he tried to smoke it. Actually, he'd originally attempted to convince Eddie to smoke it *with* him, but Eddie doesn't haul half a pharmacy around everywhere he goes only to purposely give himself lung cancer, so eventually they'd compromised: Richie smokes, Eddie watches. There had to be a witness, because by that point, Richie had given up on Eddie agreeing to share the cigarette and gone and bet Stan fifteen bucks that he could smoke the whole thing by himself without passing out. Richie took one big, long drag of *yuck* and his entire face turned *gray*. He spent the next half hour retching in the grass on his hands and knees and swearing in between dry heaves that *it's really good Eddie, I promise, you should try it.*

Eddie had been *furious* —like irrational, way out-of-proportion angry —because, despite thinking he's the biggest dumbass alive, Eddie cares about Richie so much that watching him suffer but not being able to do jack shit about it was the most hellish and helpless he'd felt since the time they basically went to literal Hell down in the sewers. They'd had a pretty big fight about the cigarette thing after that—the kind of fight that ultimately loses steam and gets dropped

but never really resolved—and Richie is *still* claiming it didn't taste *that* bad. But he also hasn't tried to smoke again.

And that's probably only the *second* stupidest of the stupid shit Eddie's done with Richie—the first being the time he helped Richie steal a bottle of whiskey from Shaw's. What makes that *specific* shitstorm of stupid stand out is the sequence of events that followed it. Eddie and Richie downed the entire contents of the bottle en route to Ben's house, where Eddie puked it right back up all over Ben's bio project (which Ben was *amazingly* cool about—way cooler than they deserved, in Eddie's opinion), which led to them spending so much time helping Ben redo the posterboard that Richie never even *started* his own bio project, so Richie failed the project, which meant Richie failed bio. And now Richie is having to retake bio next year, leaving Eddie to fend for himself in the free period they would normally have had together. So Eddie counts that as worse than the cigarette incident because they're *still* paying for it.

Both of those things were last year—ninth grade. If Eddie weren't The Greater Fool, he would've stopped listening to Richie's ideas a long-ass time ago.

But he is. And he hasn't. And now Richie's arms are framing Eddie's face—his arms with their knobby elbows and wrists joined together by forearms that are *way* too thin—and his bony knees are planted into the bed on either side of Eddie's hips. Because Richie is almost sixteen and looks like someone jumbled up a bunch of body parts from different guys and stuck them together randomly to form one super-mega-ultra adolescent stereotype.

Everything about Richie is gangly, from his still-narrow shoulders to the individual hairs that seem to be cropping up at random all over his body—dark hairs that look even weirder in contrast with his pale skin. Eddie's got hair too, but his has so far followed a sort of predictable, expected pattern: armpits, then pubes; legs, then face... The last time they went swimming, Richie took off his shirt and the first thing Eddie noticed was several long, wiry hairs sticking out of his nipples, which was *beyond weird* because if Eddie were to notice a hair growing out of his *own* nipple, he would pluck that shit out so *fast*. But one day Richie must've looked down, seen them, and just gone *oh well, guess that's a thing now*, and kept doing whatever he was

doing at the time. As it was, Eddie was almost tempted to yank them out *for* him.

Richie eats enough food for approximately eight people every day, and Eddie had started to wonder where it was all going until he realized that Richie now towers like five inches above him, so the answer is *up*. It's either that or he's got a tapeworm, because Eddie didn't know it was possible for someone who can eat two large pizzas in a single sitting to look *that* stretched-out and lanky. Especially his arms, like *god damn*. Sometimes Eddie will glance over at Richie and notice that his watch has slipped down to a spot about a third of the way toward his elbow, because that part is visibly skinnier than his wrist, and it looks *beyond weird*. Every time Eddie sees that damn watch start to fall he *itches* to reach out and slide it back into place.

In hindsight, what *should've* seemed *beyond weird* to Eddie was the amount of thought he's been putting into Richie's arms and nipples lately. So, right...about that nagging suspicion in his gut that was bugging him at thirteen but was *so damn sure* he'd have total control over by now? Yeah, not so much.

Richie kisses the same way he does almost everything else, which is to say *badly*, but—like The Voices and the other things he cares about enough to practice—with the kind of enthusiasm that lends itself naturally to improvement and eventual mastery. Eddie is judging this progress with a percentage system based almost entirely on the volume of spit he has to wipe off his face when they're done. It seems like every time they do this, Richie's about twenty percent better than before. And this is the fifth time—which is looking so far so good in the drool department—but the first was a month ago, and the second two weeks later, and the third a week after that.

And the fourth was yesterday. Eddie is beginning to notice a pattern. At this rate, they're not going to do anything else for the entire rest of the summer, and unfortunately Eddie is kind of okay with that.

His body is *way* more than *kind of* okay with that. Eddie is trying to remember if there was like, a specific event that flipped the switch in his head between *looking at the dirt under Richie's fingernails makes me wish he'd take a bath in Lysol and everywhere he touches me is on fire god I want to take his clothes off so bad*, but he doesn't think that's how

it happened. Maybe it wasn't a switch. Maybe it was more like the dimmer in his living room—lots of subtle levels. Levels like *Richie seems to have learned about soap, and when he whispers close to my face, his breath doesn't smell like week-old garlic bread, maybe he remembered to brush his teeth for once, and even when he whispers close to my face I can see every freckle on his nose...*

Richie's glasses slide off his face and smack Eddie in the forehead, which hasn't happened before because they've done this sitting up every other time, but today they'd been lying on Eddie's bed watching *Beetlejuice* when Richie had sprung the *wanna make out?* on him, so Richie had just swung a leg over Eddie's hips and climbed on. His glasses are heavier than Eddie would've thought.

"Ha," Richie breathes against his lips. "I hit a guy with glasses."

And there's another one of those little levels. *When I kiss him, he shuts the fuck up for one goddamn second.* Eddie shoves the glasses up and away. It doesn't really matter where—just off.

Richie goes back to what he was doing before he got distracted by his own dumb line, which seems to be an attempt at scraping Eddie's tonsils out with his tongue. Joke's on Richie if that's his goal though, because Eddie had his tonsils removed when he was five.

"You're gonna make me gag, asshole," Eddie gasps, wrenching his face away from the suction vortex that is Richie's mouth. "Go back to the other thing."

"You mean..." Richie slides his tongue over Eddie's bottom lip, "this thing?"

Uh yeah, that thing.

It's actually *unbelievable* how fast Eddie's body responds every time Richie gets something right, which would be a much bigger problem if that didn't happen so sporadically. It's like instead of building on successful techniques he's already tried, Richie just throws a bunch of different shit at Eddie to see what sticks, like they're playing some kind of wacky version of Duck, Duck, Goose, except instead, it's Gross, Gross, *oh God I'm about to come in my pants.*

Richie tries the same tongue slide move over Eddie's top lip—slick and warm and surprisingly gentle—and Eddie fists his hands into the covers to stave off the full-body shudder that his skin is trying to pull on him.

The thing is, in some ways, Eddie would prefer it if the last part of the game never happened. Because this is *practice*. That's the arrangement; they're practicing kissing for some imaginary, distant future Richie refers to as *Whenwegetgirlfriends* (he says it like it's all one word) . A future that evidently takes place in a universe where Richie isn't—where Richie *and me*, Eddie has to keep reminding himself—aren't repulsive or invisible (respectively) to all girls. Where there are girls who just *love* a guy with a concave butt and glasses that take up two thirds of his face; girls who can't *wait* to be taken on a date where Skinnyass McFoureyes will regale them with dick jokes for three and a half hours.

Maybe that's what Richie wants, which... okay, fine. Whatever. But it's not what Eddie wants, and it's Richie's fault that Eddie's been forced to admit that to himself. Eddie was perfectly content to *yeah yeah yeah whatever you say, Richie* anytime Richie used to talk about *Whenwegetgirlfriends* because he never even once thought about it before for himself. Eddie isn't looking to complicate his already-shitty high school experience with trying to get some girl he doesn't even care about to notice him; he's just trying to survive. So *Whenwegetgirlfriends* just sort of blended in with the rest of the random shit Richie yammers on about incessantly, most of which will probably never happen (except Richie being on *Saturday Night Live* someday—that's the only future that Eddie's *really* starting to believe in). *Whenwegetgirlfriends* was an idea that seemed on par with *when we turn into Ninja Turtles* in terms of its likelihood of coming to fruition, so it's not like it was something he needed to put much scrutiny into.

But then he kissed Richie. And now he's sort of *had* to give it some thought—because it's supposedly why he kissed Richie in the first place—and in doing so he's discovered something he wishes he hadn't: Richie is practicing on Eddie for *Whenwegetgirlfriends*. And Eddie is practicing on Richie for the next time he gets to kiss Richie.

Richie has now fitted their lips together, which feels pretty good by

itself, but Eddie remains wary because this *could* just be a precursor to some nasty trick that Richie found scribbled in the margins of the school library's copy of *Changing Bodies, Changing Lives* or something. He absolutely would not put it past Richie to pull some shit like that, so he tries not to be lured into a false sense of security by the soothing press of Richie's lips against his, which is soft and unhurried and making Eddie feel like they could do this all day.

He's kissing Richie because he wants to kiss *Richie*. In fact, there isn't anyone *at all* he can think of that he'd rather be doing this with, for practice or otherwise. So what started as a way to kill some time while developing a new and potentially useful skill together has become this huge, gaping chasm in their friendship that only Eddie is aware of. Richie obviously still thinks they're both *just practicing*, but the memory of Richie's bizarre, messy kisses has become literally the only thing Eddie jerks off to anymore.

So there's that.

Usually when Eddie has a dilemma, he takes it to the following people: Ben for information and research, Stan for a nice, refreshing *I told you so* and a worst-case scenario worry-off, Mike for sympathy without judgement, Bill—and by extension, Beverly, because Bill has her phone number—for technically helpful but usually easier-said-than-done type solutions, and Richie for the most off-the-wall, counterproductive, batshit crazy ideas any of them have ever heard. Or on occasion, just to throw them off, Richie will offer a simple, elegant answer that solves that problem and six others at the same time.

On instinct, this feels like the kind of thing that Mike would be best-suited to handle. But the idea of going to him—or any of them for that matter—and being like *yeah hey, so Richie and I decided to practice making out together for shits and giggles and now I'm like, falling...* he can't even say it in his own head.

He can't because, despite the overwhelming mountain of objective evidence that Richie is a regular, awkward, dumbass guy, Eddie still hero-worships him *just* a little bit. The nightmares have become faded and rare, but even now Richie remains the shield that protects Eddie from them when they do come. He's replayed the moment over in his

head so many times that even if he were to wake up ten years from now in a hospital with incurable amnesia, he'd probably still be mumbling Richie's words on muscle memory alone: *and now I'm going to have to kill this fucking clown.*

If Eddie had even a tiny piece of Richie's abrasive courage, he'd fess up and let everyone else try to fix it for him. But he must not, because the possibility of having to push through the day without the security blanket of Richie's nonstop yakking is so unthinkably painful that he'd do pretty much anything to avoid it. And he doesn't assume that Richie would *purposely* fuck him over if Eddie was to be like, *we need to stop because feelings are happening*—actually, he's sure Richie would be mortified and extremely sorry. The problem is that Eddie has never had to deal with an Extremely Sorry Richie before and he's afraid that he would lose his shit when faced with a Richie who isn't sure what jokes he can and can't make around Eddie anymore, or who is quiet for longer than the amount of time it takes to draw in a breath so he can keep talking.

Richie's tongue has re-entered Eddie's mouth, but he doesn't appear to be in any big hurry to *do something* with it—like he's just getting used to the feeling of having it there without any tricks—and that *shouldn't even feel like anything* but it totally does. This is Richie getting it *right*—this is why everyone makes such a big fucking deal about kissing—because the nerve endings in Eddie's mouth are all lit up and tingly in a way he hadn't really known was possible before he and Richie started doing this. It's moments like these where Eddie's brain tries to fool him into thinking Richie doesn't consider this a necessary evil, that maybe... Eddie reminds himself forcefully not to even *go there*, and instead tries to wrangle his feelings back into submission.

Like, this *really* shouldn't be as good as it is though. Logistically speaking, it's super uncomfortable, if for no reason other than that they're both made of nothing but sharp angles—Richie especially, but Eddie's not too proud to admit that he's been looking a little string-beany himself lately so he's positive that Richie would immediately call bullshit on his hypocritic ass if he bitched about it. So instead he complains inwardly because, come to think of it, Eddie's pretty sure there's never even been a single moment of these makeout-a-thons

when Richie *wasn't* jabbing him somewhere with an elbow or a knee or even his ass—which is so flat that the back of his pointy-as-fuck pelvic bone is currently digging into Eddie's legs from where he's sitting across his thighs.

Richie suddenly licks far enough into his mouth that Eddie *swears to God* he feels the tip of his tongue on his uvula.

"That's incredibly disgusting," Eddie informs him. "Stop trying to make me deepthroat your tongue or you'll be wearing all four of the fudgesicles I ate before you got here."

"You have fudgesicles?" Richie asks immediately, sitting up and swivelling his torso in the direction of Eddie's bedroom door. No *sorry for trying to suck your wisdom teeth out of your mouth and launching you face-first into a sexually-induced nervous breakdown at the same time, my bad*—Richie just wants a fudgesicle. Typical.

Also the fact that Richie didn't already know Eddie spent an hour and a half eating fudgesicles before he came over serves as a stark reminder that the first thing Eddie did after Richie called to tell him that he was leaving his house was to go straight into the bathroom and thoroughly brush and floss his teeth, just in case. And that the last thing he did before he opened the door to let Richie in was throw out the spearmint gum he started chewing right after he spit out his toothpaste. Eddie is under no illusions as to what this says about him as a person and how he feels about what he's doing with Richie, but even more than that, how truly far gone and ultimately fucked he is.

Anyway, Eddie expects Richie to jump up off the bed and make a break for the kitchen to raid the freezer, so he prepares for Richie's disappointment over his imminent discovery that the four fudgesicles Eddie ate earlier were the last of the box. But Richie seems to have already abandoned the idea of a snack because Eddie feels those razor-sharp butt bones grinding into his femurs as Richie turns back around to face him. He doesn't verbally say *never mind the fudgesicles*, but he's smirking in a way that can't possibly have anything to do with food, so Eddie feels confident that he's not thinking about it anymore.

"Disgusting,' huh?" Richie says. "You should try telling that to your

dick instead of me.”

It takes a minute for Eddie to work through the implication in that sentence, which is a red flag in and of itself, because he only thinks this slowly when his brain is operating at less than full capacity *because so much of his blood has migrated elsewhere.*

Eddie becomes aware of exactly *where* it’s all gone in the same moment that he realizes Richie is obviously *way* ahead of him on the uptake. Like, Eddie could sort of feel things moving in that direction, but gradually enough that it hadn’t even occurred to him that *Richie* would be able to tell. So that one’s on Eddie. His heart plops unceremoniously into his stomach the way stones do when Richie tries to skip them on the quarry.

If someone had given him the parameters of this scenario and asked him, in theory, what his reaction would be—like, *you and Richie are making out in your bed when you pop a boner; he notices and points it out, what would you do, go* —Eddie would’ve guessed that screaming and swearing and crying would be involved, but he doesn’t feel like doing any of those things. His mind has gone utterly, perilously blank, and he gropes in the emptiness for something to focus on, something to say. Anything—anything other than staring endlessly up into Richie’s eyes, which are bright and clear and so much bigger than they usually are because—

Bum bum bum ba dum bum ba dum bum

Bum bum bum ba dum bum ba dum bum

Bum bum bum ba dum bum ba dum bum

Okay, anything *but* that.

Shake, shake, shake, Senora,

Shake your body line

Shake, shake, shake, Senora,

Shake it all the time

The cosmic unfairness of having to try to remember where he put the remote *while the foundations of his sanity crumble inside him* distracts Eddie momentarily from the actual meltdown. Why the fuck did he not mute the movie when this kissing shit all started going down and also why the fuck is this song *so much louder* than the rest of *Beetlejuice*? They didn't even hear the seance scene or the desert worm snake or whatever the hell that thing is or the wedding, but fucking—

Work, work, work, Senora

Work your body line

Work, work, work, Senora

Work it all the time

Richie, still blissfully unaware that *they are in the middle of a goddamn crisis*, laughs and starts up this bouncy little dance routine on Eddie's lap which, unfortunately, feels kind of great in the whole crotch area. And that sucks big time balls because Eddie's dick is now sending all the *cut that shit out* messages from his brain directly to voicemail, so he knows that the boner situation is not getting any better. He also can't even blame Richie for that because like, it's *Jump In the Line* — he wouldn't expect anyone, let alone Richie, *not* to dance to that. But seriously where the fuck is the goddamn remote control? Eddie swears to God that—

Jump in the line, rock your body in time

Okay, I believe you!

Jump in the line, rock your body in time

After a lot of one-handed fumbling on the bedside table, Eddie's fingers close around the remote and he manages to aim it with his shaking hands and shut the whole TV off.

Okay, I believe—

Fucking finally.

Where were they? Oh right, *meltdown time*.

“Your glasses,” are the words that come out of Eddie's mouth, although it feels like someone else is saying them. Eddie reaches back behind his pillow to try to locate them, but he hears the clatter as his sweeping hand accidentally knocks them to the floor instead. “Let me —”

Richie snorts obnoxiously and leans all the way back down so that the tip of his nose is touching Eddie's. “Nah, I can see you just fine from here,” he says. Eddie can hear the laughter behind the words, can tell Richie thinks that he should be laughing too because of the ridiculous song and because Richie was *flirting with him*, but all Eddie can manage to be is angry that Richie has sabotaged his attempt to draw focus away from what he increasingly feels like is a bomb ticking down the impending seconds until the explosion of their friendship.

“Fuck off,” says Eddie, way more viciously than intended, and *goddamn it* it's like he's cut the blue wire instead of the red one and now it's just going to blow them up even sooner.

“Wait, what?” Richie pulls back, correctly identifying Eddie's tone as *not kidding*, and squints at him from barely a foot away with his nose

all scrunched up. He looks like a mole. “Why?”

“Just get off me,” Eddie snaps, going for the gold in Being a Douchebag even though he knows he’s making it worse, trying and failing to turn over and twist away. “Get up.”

“Whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa whoa wait Eddie—Eddie,” Richie says, not budging from his lap but placing his hands on Eddie’s shoulders. “Listen to this: last year in Geometry, Gretta told Jessica that you should try to lick the back of a guy’s teeth while you’re making out and like, she would know--amiright?”

“I don’t give a shit what Gretta says,” Eddie tells him, trying to keep his voice from shaking. “I don’t give a *shit* what Gretta says. Stop telling me about Gretta. I don’t want to hear about that shit. I don’t —”

Richie is still talking. He’s also still sitting on Eddie’s junk.

“—but then she said they like it when you use your teeth and I was all like *that’s bullshit for sure* and she goes *no way* so I was like *how many times have you tried it?* Remember how I told you I already have detention this year even though we haven’t started yet? That was what did it, I got sent to the office again and he said it was *the final straw, young man, when you —*”

The final straw for Eddie too, apparently, because he has reached the limit of his ability to keep his shit together with Richie talking and snorting at his own jokes and *still sitting on Eddie’s goddamn boner*. Eddie is starting to worry it won’t ever go away with Richie all up in his space, so Richie *really* needs gets right the fuck off him, right the fuck now.

“I can’t *do* this with you anymore!” Eddie wails—like, seriously *wails*—because there’s no other word for it. It *erupts* out of him in a burst of unguarded honesty that he immediately regrets because Richie shuts *right the fuck up* and just stares at him, evidently too stunned to keep up his (admittedly spot-on) impression of Principal Johansen.

“Do *what* with me?” Richie asks. One corner of his upper lip rises and he tilts his head in an almost comical expression of confusion. Eddie

would be even *more* distressed if he thought Richie was making fun of him right now, but Richie wouldn't do that because Eddie knows that deep down he's way too nice to dick around when people are genuinely hysterical, unless of course he thinks he might be able to calm them down by messing with them. But he already tried that, Eddie realizes—that's what he was doing when he wouldn't shut up about Gretta—and it didn't work. So now he's out of ideas, quiet, confused, and waiting for Eddie to tell him where he went wrong. And Richie may be a little shit, but he's Eddie's favorite little shit in the whole world, and because of that Eddie figures he at least deserves some clarification.

So, "I can't practice with you anymore." *There* . Eddie almost wants to stand up, dust his hands off and back it on up, like *I just threw a grenade in the room, whatcha gonna do Richie?*

But of course, he can't. Because Richie. Is still. Sitting. On. His. Crotch.

"Practice what?" Richie asks. His expression does not change. And now Eddie is legit getting *mad* because apparently he was wrong to think Richie has the emotional intelligence to tell the difference between Actually Upset Eddie and Eddie Just Being Eddie. He *knows* Richie is still fucking with him because Richie can't possibly *be* this dense for real. So Eddie tries to whack him on the side of the face, but he ducks just in time.

"Practice *kissing* with you, dipshit," Eddie tells him—slowly and clearly—enunciating like he believes Richie really is as much of a dumbfuck as he's pretending to be.

"We're not *practicing*," Richie replies immediately, in the same exact tone of voice Eddie was just using with him, but much louder. "What the fuck made you think we were *practicing*?"

"Uh, I dunno—maybe when *you* said *we should practice kissing*— " Eddie says, glaring up at Richie, that motherfucker, while his heart claws its way out of his stomach and back into his chest so that it can thump cartoonishly against his ribcage because...they're not practicing? If they're not practicing, then what...

“Whatthefuck—I didn’t say that!” Richie interrupts.

“Yes you did! That’s *literally* why we started doing this in the first place,” says Eddie. “For *whenwegetgirlfriends* —you said you wanted to practice for—”

“ *What?* Jesus Christ dude, that was like...a million years ago—like a month or some shit,” Richie says. *Twenty-seven days actually, but who’s counting?* “Wait, you thought we were *still* doing that?”

Richie’s eyes are still huge and round, eyebrows totally obscured by the shaggy, uncombed mop of his hair—his stupid, ridiculous hair that Eddie desperately wants to hate but can’t because it’s as thick and wild as Richie himself. It’s only then that Eddie remembers Richie can’t even really see his face because his glasses are still on the floor under the bed. It’s going to be pretty awkward if Eddie has to go fishing around for them down there so that Richie can storm out on him.

“Uh, yeah? Cause *you* never said we *weren’t* anymore?” says Eddie.

“Well *duh*, because I thought you knew,” Richie says. “I mean, yeah the first time, but like after that I thought we were just doing it ‘cause we wanted to. Like for the regular reasons.”

Eddie doesn’t have a clue what he means by *the regular reasons*, because the reasons behind why Richie does *any* of the things he does make very little sense to most people, so it’s possible that *the regular reasons* are things like *because we both love Ghostbusters*, or *because neither of us has ever been able to do a cartwheel*. But that’s not the part that matters—it’s the *we wanted to* that Eddie latches onto like a life preserver because—

“You really didn’t know?” Richie demands. “Is that why you’re such a shitty kisser?”

What the fuck?! Where the hell does *Richie* get off calling *anyone else* a shitty kisser? Eddie is about to tell him he can *practice kiss* Eddie’s ass if he thinks he’s such hot shit when Richie comes out with:

“Is it cause you don’t really want to kiss me? Cause like *god damn*,

Eddie—you could've just said that a few weeks ago and I would've been like *alright, cool, whatever*, and we could've just been playing Sega this whole time instead."

Richie's tone of voice doesn't change from when he said *is that why you're such a shitty kisser* and Eddie can tell that he meant for all this to come out sounding like he *absolutely* doesn't give a flying fuck what they do or don't do, but Eddie knows him too well to be fooled by *that* act. He takes a moment to fully sink his teeth into the fact that he's managed to fuck this up *so bad* that Richie now thinks *Eddie* is the one who isn't interested, then takes a deep breath, and says:

"No I—I want to. A lot. I want to a lot and I can't pretend I don't because I can't do this if it's not like...like *real*, and I thought you didn't actually want it to be *me* because—"

"No no no no no," Richie says, shaking his head so violently that his hair flops back and forth over his forehead. "See?"

Richie grabs Eddie's hand and, without hesitation, plants it firmly right between his legs. He squeezes Eddie's hand so that their fingers curl inward together. Eddie's not sure what exactly he's supposed to be *see?* -ing here, but he's not complaining either because he's willing to admit (maybe even out loud now) that he's more than okay with Richie holding his hand and pressing it into the crotch of his jeans. Even though Richie has had these jeans since last September and they've probably only been washed like twice.

"I mean," Richie says, "okay maybe not *now*, jackass, not after you totally flipped the fuck out on me for no reason, but I was just as hard as you before. All you had to do was look down, it was probably obvious as *fuck*—like have you really *never* looked at my pants while we're making out?"

Eddie is only half listening, if that. He doesn't point out that Richie evidently can't tell the difference between having feelings and having a hard-on, because he doesn't need to; based on the way he rubs his thumb over the back of Eddie's hand, Richie might as well have admitted to both. Instead, Eddie is focused on imagining maybe someday—not today, but like, probably before the semester starts—pulling down Richie's pants and getting a real good, close-up look at

that wang Richie brags about so much. Eddie bets it's going to be pretty fucking weird, just like the rest of him. He can honestly say that, whether it is or not, he can hardly wait to see it for himself. His eagerness is probably written all over his face, but Eddie can't find it in him to give a shit about how sappy he must look to Richie right now.

It's like Richie has unlocked a secret door in the back of Eddie's brain that contains all the romantic bullshit they've been making fun of for *years*: the hand-holding and cuddling and song lyrics and that fucking movie Ben loves so much— *Moonstruck* —and other stuff he didn't even realize he wanted. It all comes gushing out at once and floods his mind with a sensation of loony euphoria that is made up of the most vomit-inducingly *cute* thoughts imaginable. Eddie is content to let the sentiments slosh around in there among the hearts and flowers because he knows Richie would *never* let him live it down if he said any of them out loud. Even if Richie maybe thinks some of those same things about Eddie.

Eddie is interrupted in the intensive mental process of committing the sight of their hands together on the fly of Richie's jeans to memory when Richie blurts out, "So does this mean you're finally gonna stop lying there like a dead fish and actually kiss me back for once?"

And it's like Richie just hit the *eject* button on the cassette player in Eddie's head because *whyyy do birds suddenly appear, every tiime you* —stops playing abruptly and all the mush sucks itself back up through the secret door, leaving Eddie with a single, driving purpose: to flip Richie over onto his back and kiss his idiot face until he has to take back that shit he just said about Eddie being like a dead fish.

Game on, motherfucker.

Author's Note:

In case you wanted the same story from Richie's point-of-view, I've written that out also! Here goes:

Went over to Eddie's today to make out. That neurotic little asshole has apparently been shitting himself for *weeks* cause he didn't realize this was

like...a thing now! Like, what the actual fuck? But once we cleared that up it was awesome. Will probably do it again tomorrow.

Oh and as always, a BIG thanks to jillian_bowes and dawnseeker for being the greatest enablers friends in the world!

I'm at yallreddieforthis.tumblr.com. Please come say hi and we can talk about Reddie and/or Stranger Things--I just finished Season 2!